



(C) Hover Hammer, the Steerable Airship (repost)

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Run Date: 08/30/2004

(C) It's got dual airbags, three engines and one of the most sophisticated audio systems around. No, it's not the latest sports car from Europe -- it's Hover Hammer, a steerable airship that may become one of the multi-Int platforms of the future.

[REDACTED]
Hover Hammer

(C) Hover Hammer is a 62-foot diameter airship with engines on either side and one at the back. It can be manned or remotely piloted and has already done demonstration flights up to 10,700 feet. The [National Tactical Integration Office](#) National Tactical Integration Office here at NSA mounted a Digital Receiver Technology model 1301 receiver onboard the airship, that was remotely operated via line-of-sight radio by a ground based operator. The airship launched from an airfield near Solomons Island, Maryland and was able to intercept international shipping data emanating from the Long Island, New York area, including lines of bearing.

(U) It is a helium-filled sphere inside another sphere, constructed of Spectra, the same material used to make bullet-proof vests. It has a 1000 lb payload capacity at present, with a planned 5000 lb capacity. It "hovers" above small arms fire, has a negligible IR signature, and radar can't detect it. In an early-1980's incident, a straying balloon stayed aloft despite being strafed twice by an F-16 fighter.

(U) More experiments, including the use of onboard imagery sensors, are being conducted. The current plans are to develop the airship for unmanned operations at altitudes of approximately 20,000 feet for up to 48 hours. Future variants are planned to be 200 feet in diameter and will operate at 68,000 feet with mission durations of up to six months. NTIO and S3's Tactical Platforms are already collaborating on options for deploying SIGINT systems on this platform.

(U//FOUO) More information on Hover Hammer is available from NTIO ("go NSA-NTI" on NSA Net) -- the poc is [REDACTED] Chief of the Air Operations and Programs Branch (S1411).

(U) *This article first appeared on August 9, 2004.*

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